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Insights into hours worked, July 2021

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Source: [Labour Force, Australia, July 2021](#)

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The ABS previously indicated its intention to cease publishing this article every month after the May 2021 issue (on 17 June 2021), and to only publish future updates as needed. Given the increased restrictions across various areas in Australia, the ABS intends to continue to publish further articles each month until changes in hours worked series return to pre-COVID conditions.

Hours worked and employment

Hours worked decreased by 0.2% (in seasonally adjusted terms) between June and July 2021, while employment increased by less than 0.1% or 2,200 people. The 0.2% fall in hours worked followed a decrease of 1.8% between May and June, and reflected the large fall in hours worked in New South Wales (7.0%) and recovery in hours worked in Victoria (9.7%) in July.

The July survey reference period was from 4 July to 17 July 2021. The New South Wales fall coincided with the Greater Sydney Lockdown, which began on 26 June, with the second and

third weeks of the lockdown covered by the July reference period. The Victorian recovery reflected the end of the fourth lockdown on 10 June, with the July reference period falling almost entirely before the start of the fifth lockdown on 16 July.

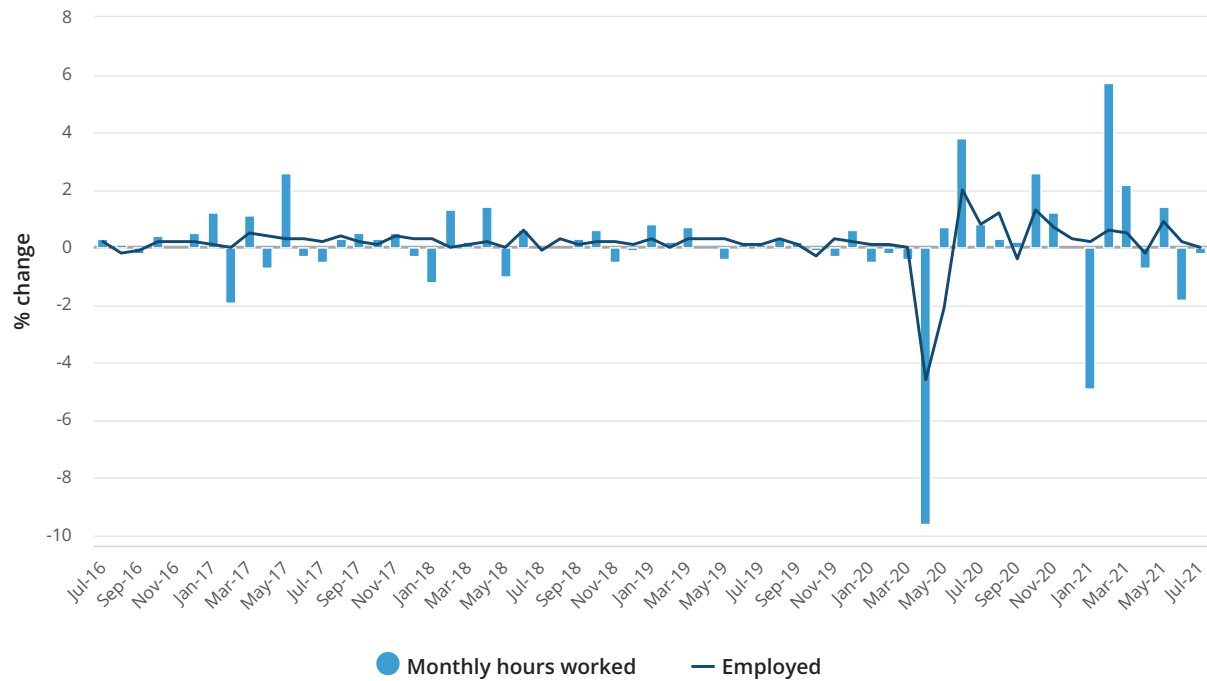
Chart 1 shows changes in hours worked and employment, indexed to March 2020, while Chart 2 shows monthly changes in hours worked and employment since July 2016.

Chart 1: Hours worked and employment index, Seasonally adjusted (March 2020 = 100.0)



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

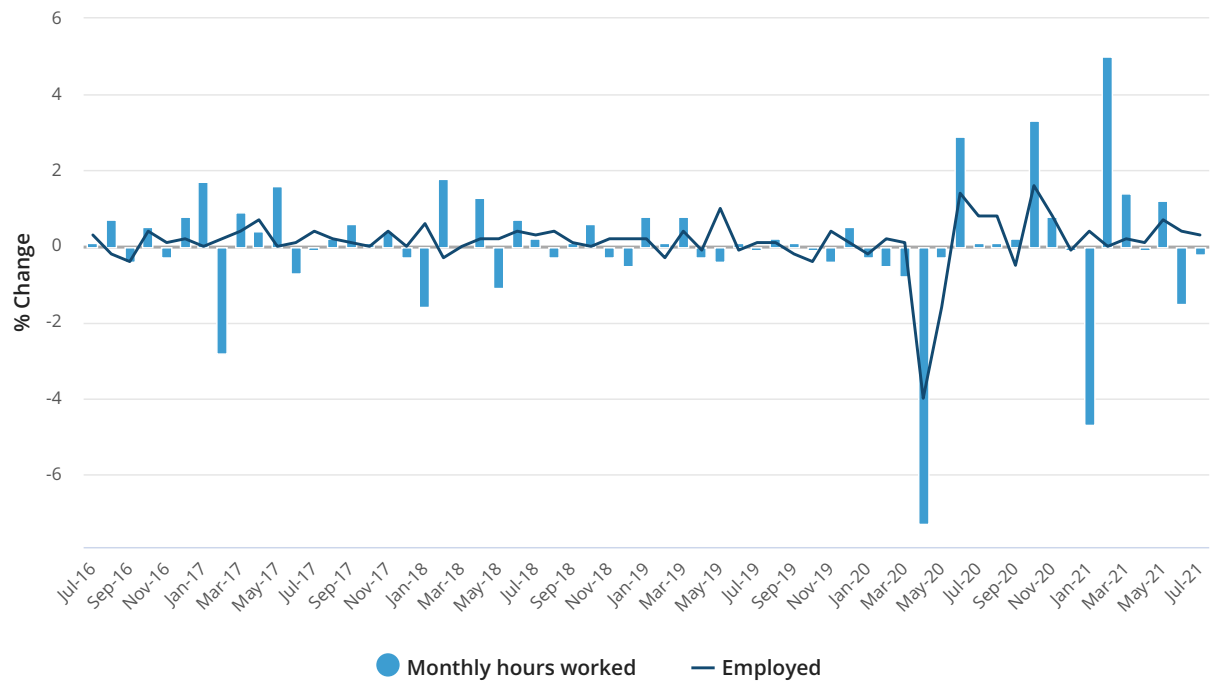
Chart 2: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

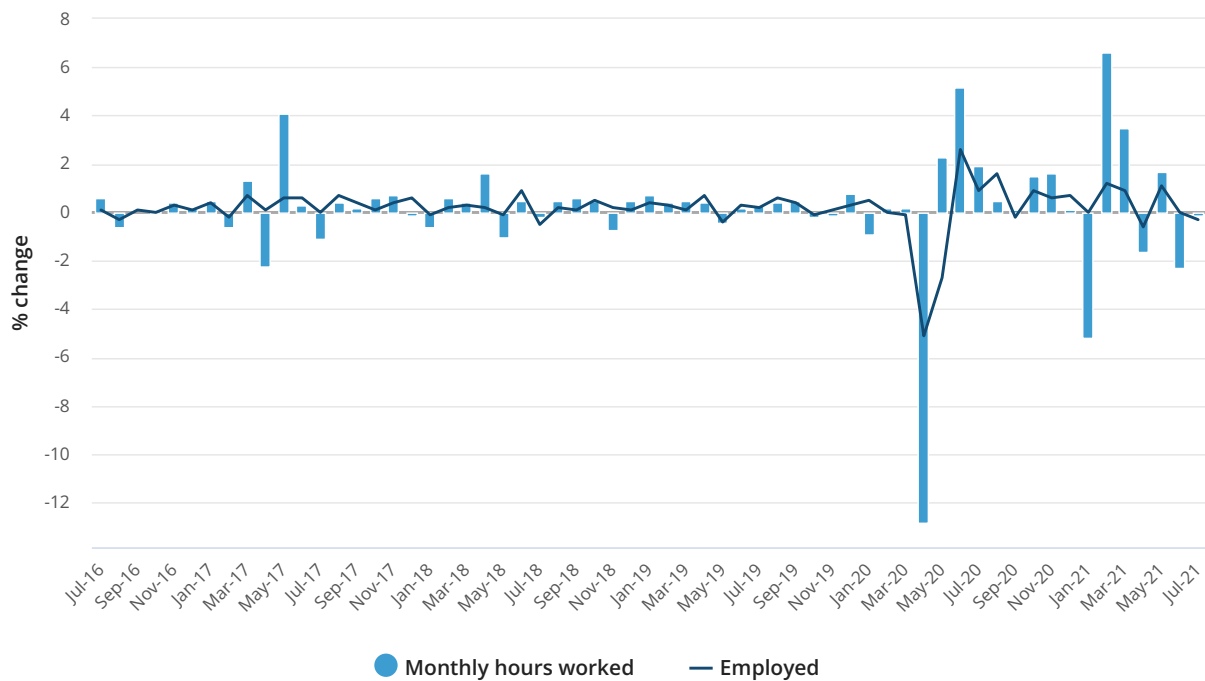
Changes in employment and hours worked for men and women

Table 2a: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Males, Seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

Table 2b: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Females, Seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

States and territories

Chart 3 shows the changes in monthly hours worked for each of the states and territories, indexed to March 2020. Hours worked over the COVID period have been impacted by lockdowns and other restrictions that have been in place across the country.

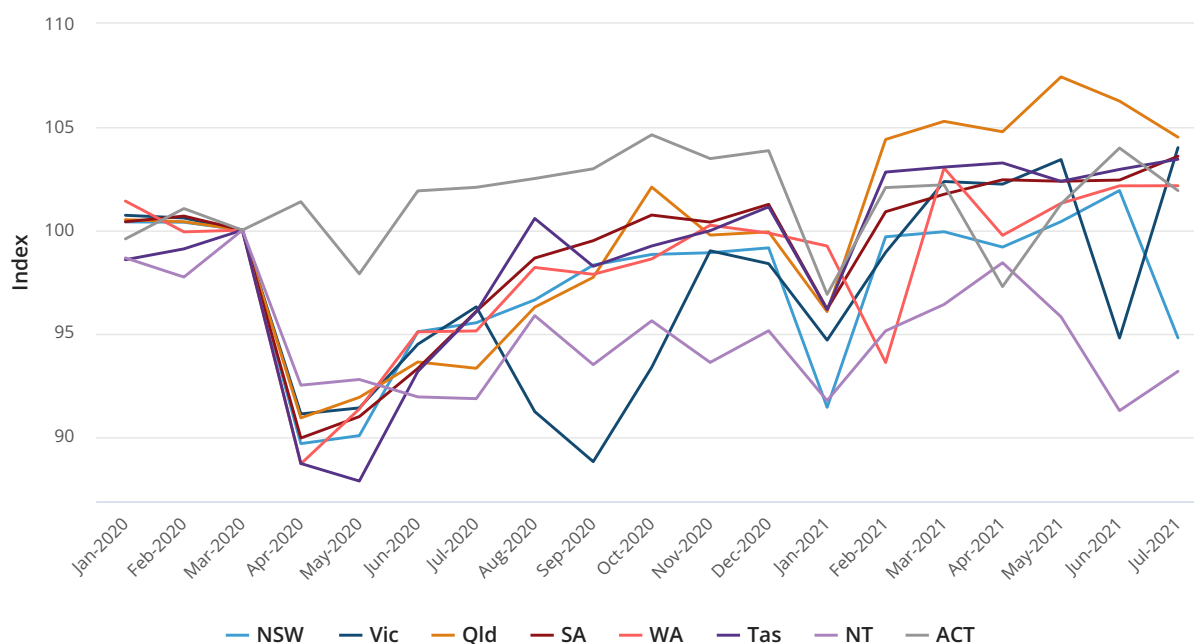
The monthly hours worked for New South Wales fell 40.5 million hours (7.0%) between June and July, and were 5.2% lower than March 2020.

Monthly hours worked in Victoria rose 42.3 million hours (9.7%) between June and July 2021, recovering from the 8.4% fall during the June lockdown.

The Northern Territory has remained consistently below its March 2020 level, which partly reflects its employment and hours worked coming off a recent peak at that time, together

with the inherent variability in its seasonally adjusted data.

Chart 3: Monthly hours worked index, states and territories, seasonally adjusted (March 2020 = 100)



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 19 and 19a

People working fewer hours

Chart 4 shows the number of people working fewer (or no) hours in July 2021:

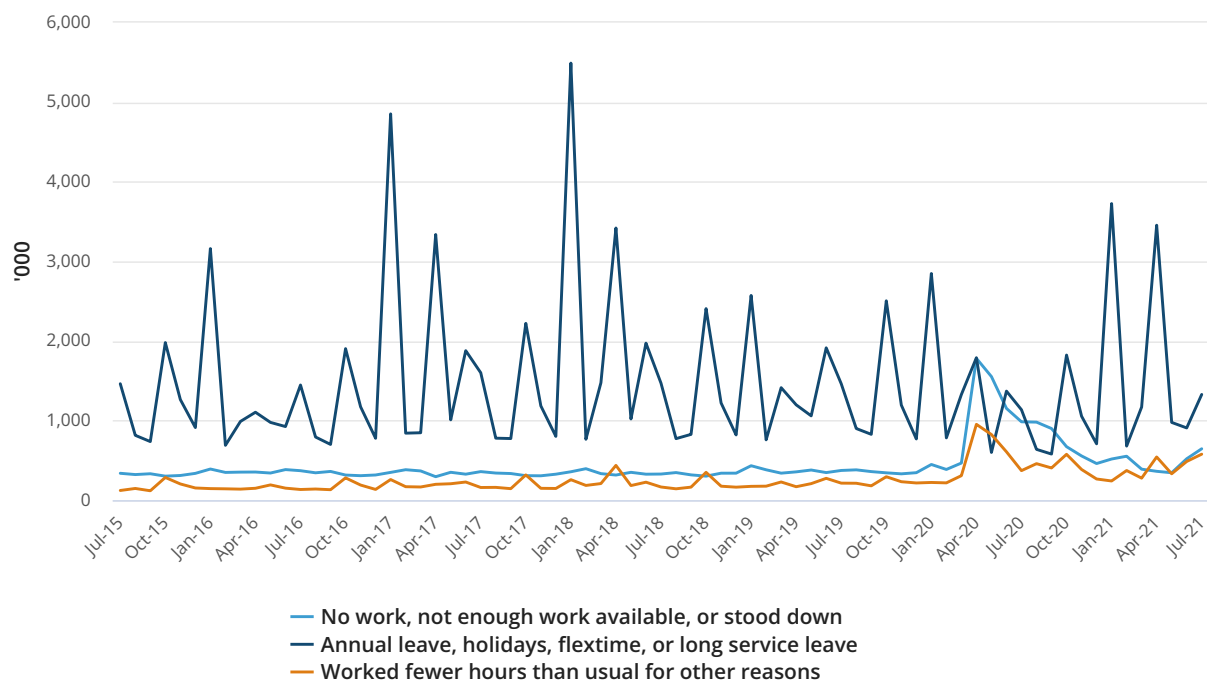
- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave - which was 1,328,200 people.
- due to economic reasons - which was 646,000 people. This was an increase of 125,900 from June 2021.
- due to other reasons - which was 577,900 people. This was an increase of 91,600 from June 2021.

When assessing the impacts of lockdowns, it is important to consider larger than seasonal changes in people reporting 'economic reasons' (that is, people reporting having no work,

not enough work or being stood down) and 'other reasons'. People reporting other reasons has increased during periods of lockdowns, indicating that some respondents feel that the longstanding categories do not fully capture the complexity of the restrictions and/or that it is difficult for them to attribute the reasons to a single category.

In addition to economic reasons and other reasons, some people who are impacted by lockdowns may also report different reasons, such as taking annual leave or holidays or using flextime during the lockdown period. All reasons are available from data cubes EM2a and EM2b.

Chart 4: People working fewer than their usual hours, or no hours at all, Original



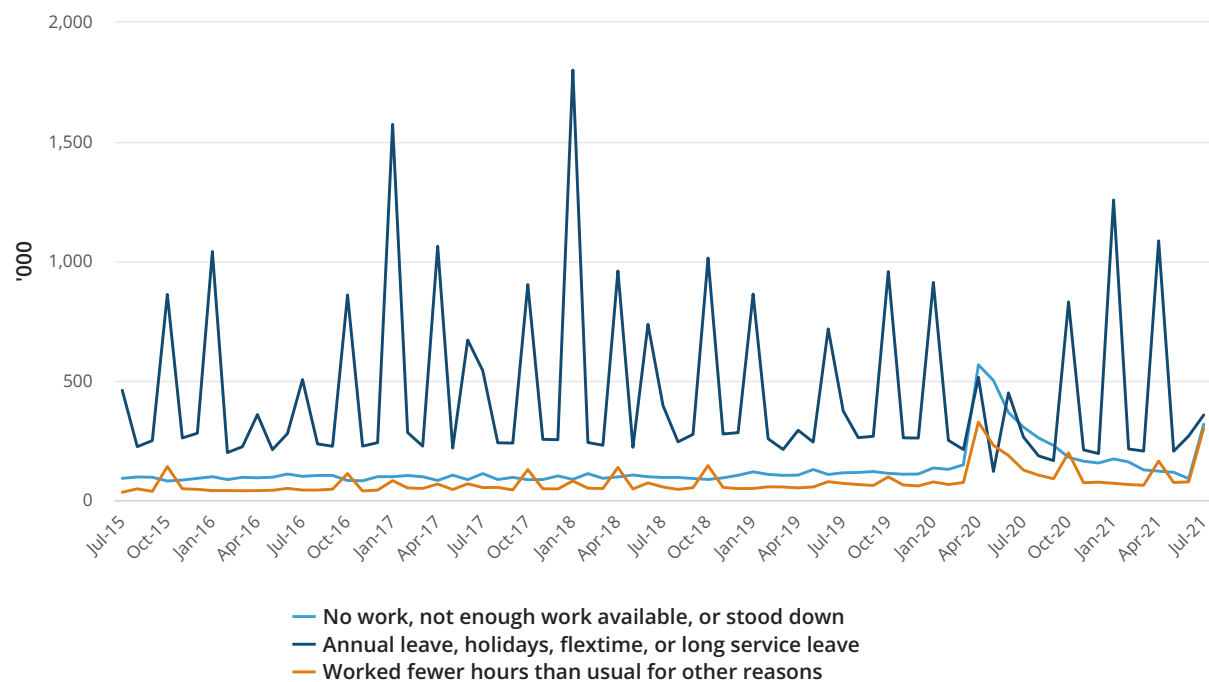
Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2a

Chart 4a shows the number of people working fewer (or no) hours in July 2021 in New South Wales:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave - which was 356,400 people.

- due to economic reasons - which was 317,300 people. This was an increase of 227,400 from June 2021.
- due to other reasons - which was 300,200 people. This was an increase of 223,600 from June 2021.

Chart 4a: People working fewer than their usual hours in New South Wales, Original

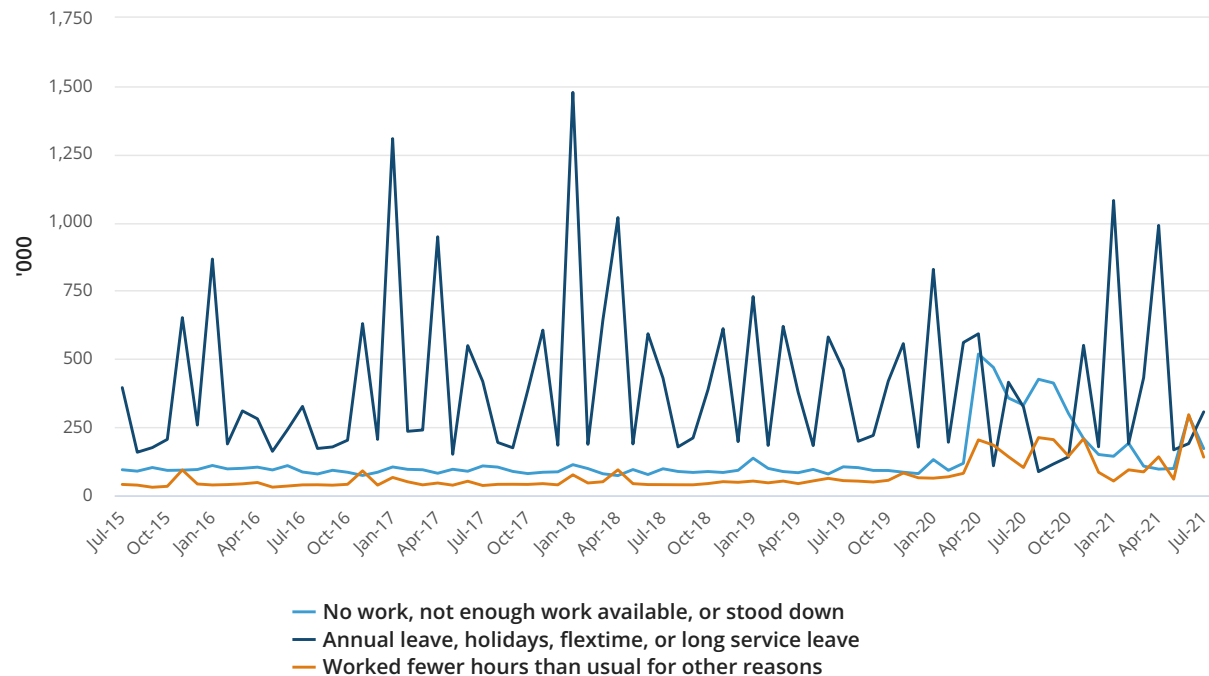


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

Chart 4b shows the number of people working fewer (or no) hours in July 2021 in Victoria:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave - which was 356,000 people.
- due to economic reasons - which was 171,300 people. This was a decrease of 120,600 from June 2021.
- due to other reasons - which was 140,100 people. This was a decrease of 155,800 from June 2021.

Chart 4b: People working fewer than their usual hours in Victoria, Original

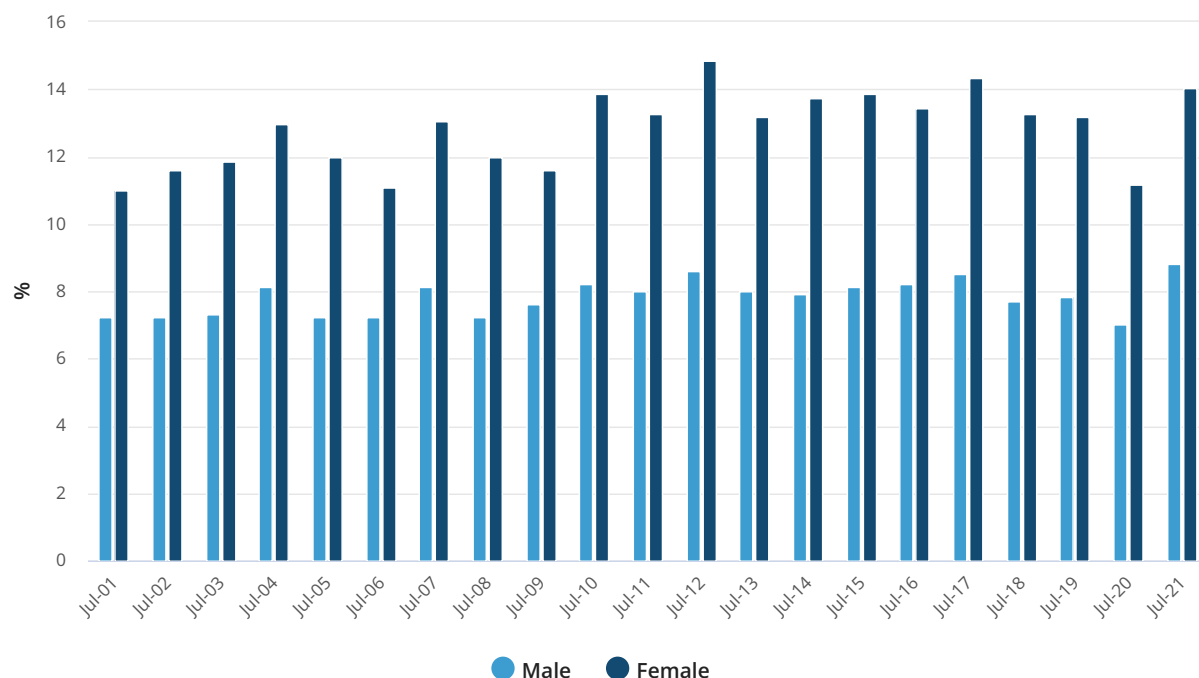


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

People working zero hours

Chart 5 shows the proportion of employed people who worked zero hours in July over the past 20 years. 11.4% of employed people worked zero hours in July 2021 (13.7% in New South Wales and 8.6% in Victoria).

Chart 5: Proportion of employed working zero hours, Original

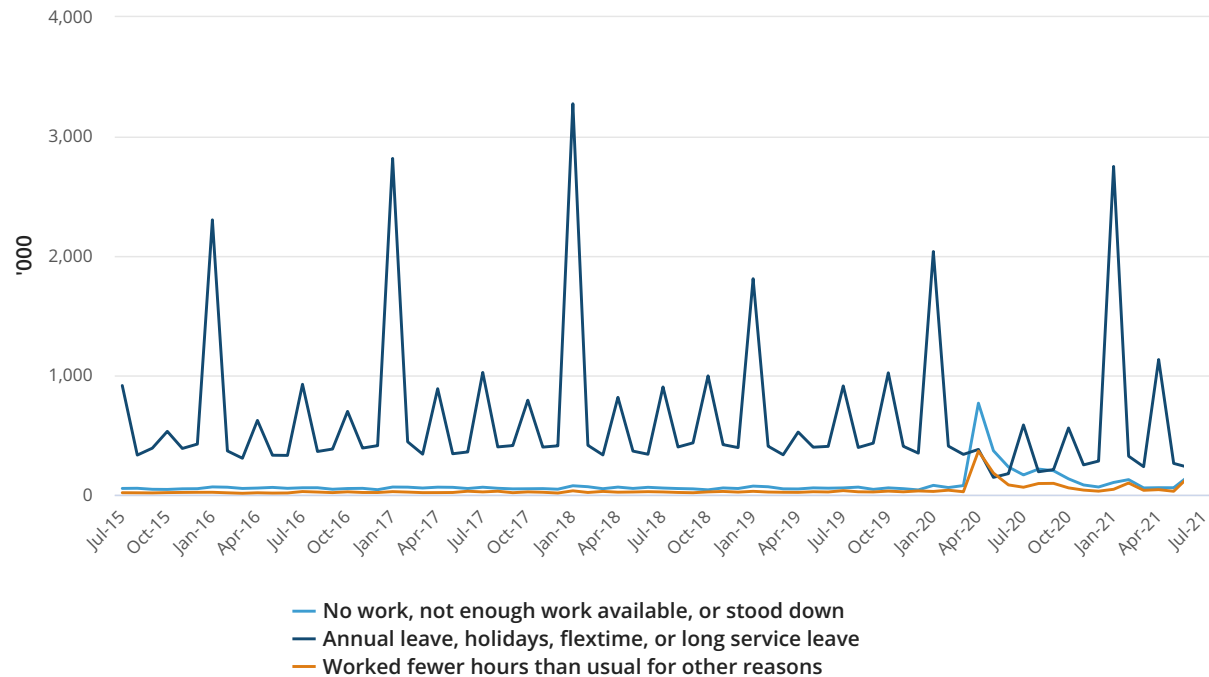


Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Table 9

Chart 6 shows the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons, due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave and due to other reasons. As with people working fewer hours, there is a distinct seasonal pattern to people taking leave, with large increases each January and during school holiday periods. In July 2021:

- 758,600 employed people worked zero hours due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave.
- 181,500 employed people worked zero hours for economic reasons.
- 206,900 employed people worked zero hours for other reasons.

Chart 6: Employed people working zero hours, Original

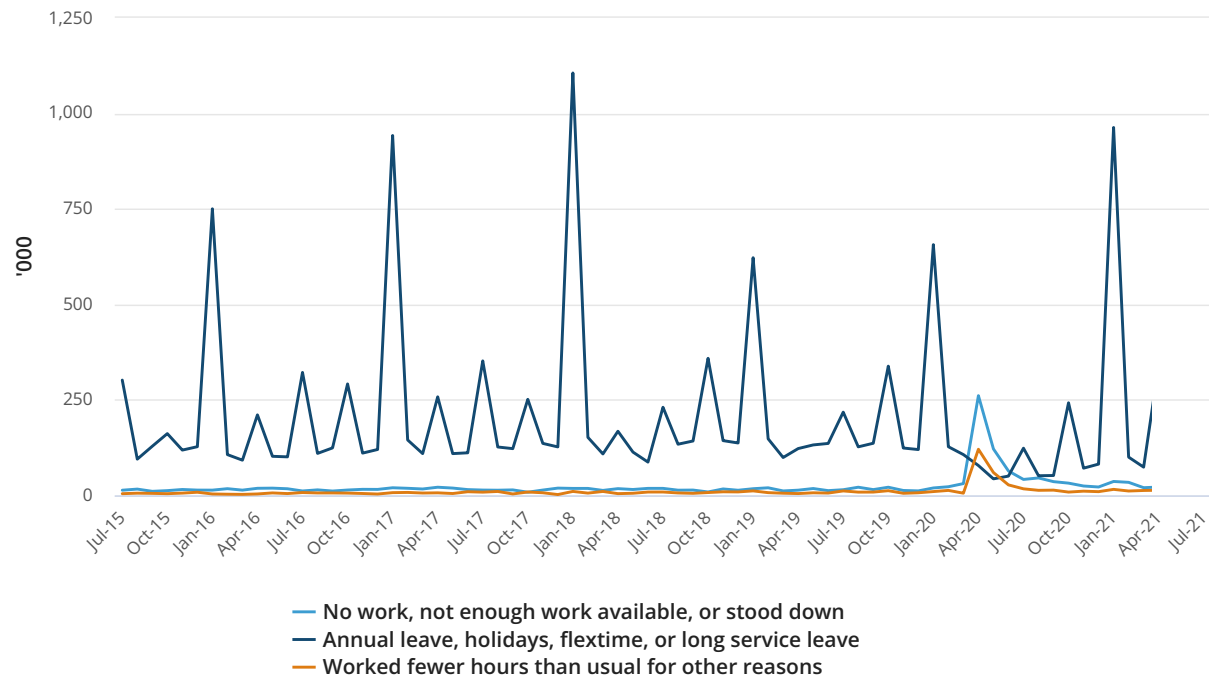


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2a

Chart 6a shows the number of employed people who worked zero hours in New South Wales in July 2021:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave - which was 217,100 people.
- due to economic reasons - which was 116,700 people. This was highest number of people since May 2020.
- due to other reasons - which was 134,100 people. This was higher than in April 2020.

Chart 6a: Employed people working zero hours in New South Wales, Original

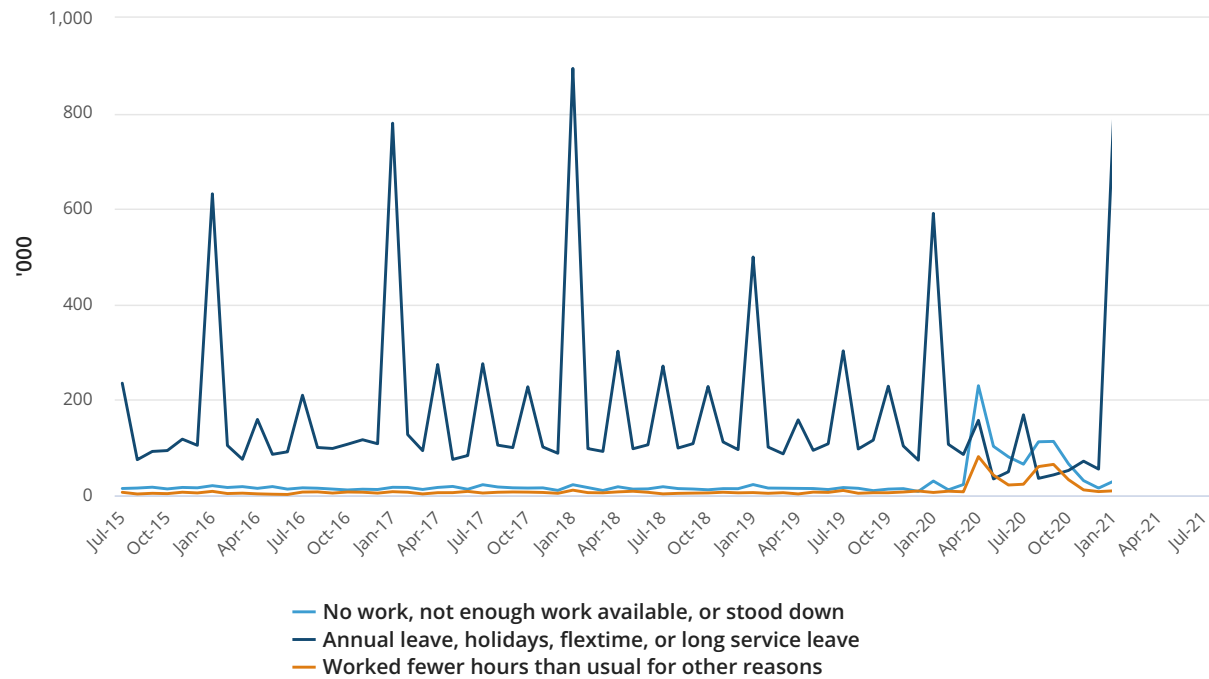


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

Chart 6b shows the number of employed people who worked zero hours in Victoria in July 2021:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave - which was 144,900 people.
- due to economic reasons - which was 41,500 people.
- due to other reasons - which was 35,200 people.

Chart 6b: Employed people working zero hours in Victoria, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

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(<mailto:labour.statistics@abs.gov.au>).